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TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [MARR](#) [LH](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SECRETARY GATES' VISIT TO LITHUANIA

Classified By: Ambassador Cloud for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary and Introduction: Welcome to Lithuania. Your interaction with your hosts during the Informal Meeting of NATO Defense Ministers comes at the right time, in the perfect setting, to positively impact Lithuanian contributions to the GWOT. As we broadly urge allies to increase efforts in ISAF, you have an excellent opportunity to highlight the Lithuanian example of active support embodied in their PRT and SOF deployments in Afghanistan. Your bilateral discussions should focus a politically cautious Defense Minister on the need to continue and even expand contributions in Afghanistan and to keep the door open for future OIF commitments. You should expect that the Lithuanians will inevitably raise a host of secondary topics which are adequately addressed in other read-ahead materials. While these issues deserve a brief hearing, they should not be allowed to eclipse the hard discussion of troop deployments. Upcoming parliamentary elections will tend to distract the attention of the Lithuanian leadership from their commitments abroad as they focus on domestic political concerns. Your visit will help to keep our overwhelmingly positive bilateral defense relationship productive and on-track. End summary and introduction.

Afghanistan

¶2. (C) As you know, Lithuania has been a staunch ally in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and Lithuanian officials do not tire of hearing our appreciation for this. Currently, Lithuania has approximately 200 troops in Afghanistan; special forces are operating in Zabul Province, and Lithuania runs a PRT in Ghor. The GOL's commitment to the PRT is firm through 2010 and we believe the SOF deployment can be further developed to provide ISAF uncaveated combat troops and training capabilities in a tough neighborhood.

¶3. (C) We suggest that you urge Minister of Defense Juozas Olekas to: expand the current SOF deployment from 55 to 75 troops; extend the current mission until summer 2009; and enhance the mission profile of SOF to include training and advising the ANA. The Lithuanian CHOD, Lieutenant General Tutkus, prefers to develop existing deployments rather than generate new ones. He is strongly opposed to creating an OMLT but is amenable to the further development of the SOF mission to include a training dimension. Olekas' present inclination (in part based on political concerns) is to curtail the SOF mission rather than expand it, but his position has softened in the past week and we believe your intervention may be decisive.

¶4. (C) The PRT has been Lithuania's flagship contribution to the GWOT. They are rightfully proud of their leadership and growing self-sufficiency as they have taken on the costs and burdens of logistical support from the United States. Not being content simply to raise the Lithuanian colors in Ghor,

the GOL is actively seeking international donors to augment its own limited resources to sponsor development projects. This remote region has been relatively secure, although Olekas worries that without more visible development and reconstruction progress the southern districts could become a Taliban sanctuary. The GOL has asked for our assistance in helping them present coherent strategic impact proposals to potential donors, such as UAE. In particular they have requested a United States Army Corps of Engineers survey to scope the requirements for an East-West transportation corridor linking Kabul and Herat through Ghor Province. You should applaud the PRT and offer what assurances you can that we will help the Lithuanians help themselves with information and advice to initiate development projects.

Iraq

15. (C) Iraq is another story. Lithuania currently has an infantry platoon serving in Al Kut, five staff officers working for MNF-I, and four trainers as part of NTM-I. While the Lithuanians have served with us in Iraq since 2003, it took considerable effort, including the intervention of Deputy Secretary England and Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte, to convince Olekas to re-commit combat troops after the British and Danish reductions last summer. Olekas has publicly stated that the platoon will return to Lithuania after the current six-month rotation ends in May. We consider future rotations after the Lithuanian parliamentary elections in October unlikely. Trainers and staff officers will remain and could be expanded.

16. (C) Olekas claims that public opinion in Lithuania is turning against continued involvement in Iraq. We have not seen this trend in any significant measure, but have no doubt that casualties would quickly change the political landscape. While our hopes are slim for future Iraq combat commitments, we believe it important that you thank Olekas for Lithuania's current deployment and remind him that there is still a need and an open request for forces in OIF. Without offending Lithuanian sensibilities about making "sovereign" decisions, he needs to hear that a decision not to redeploy will not be greeted warmly by Washington.

17. (C) You will also meet with President Valdas Adamkus. Adamkus returned to Lithuania after spending most of his adult life in the United States and rising to senior levels in EPA. The President, while constitutionally charged with supreme authority over the armed forces, has tried to stay above the political fray on deployment issues in the past. Nonetheless, he was instrumental in walking back some of Olekas' earlier statements which could have precluded the current Iraq deployment, and strongly supports close links between Lithuania and the U.S. You should employ the same themes in your meetings with both officials. It will be especially effective for Olekas to hear these points twice; the second time in the company of the head of state.

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